



State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services



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Commissioner

**DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE**

February 25, 2015

Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila, Senator McLachlan, Representative Smith and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. I am Morna A. Murray, J.D., Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to **Proposed [H.B. No. 5523](#) AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE'S PURCHASE OF GROUP HOMES**. The proposal looks to limit the purchase price of a group home purchased by the state to no more than the median price in the geographic area where the home is located.

DDS supports approximately 20,000 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Connecticut in various residential settings including more than 870 Community Living Arrangements (CLAs), also referred to as "group homes", that DDS licenses, funds, or directly operates. Individuals in all of these homes live and work, go to school, and enjoy the many opportunities that Connecticut communities provide. Specifically, 63 of these group homes are publicly operated, and the majority of these are state-owned.

Although DDS does not do a lot of public group home development, not being able to spend more than the median purchase price in an area for a home could be problematic. Many factors, including the specific needs and preferences of the individuals with intellectual disability and their families go into the final choice of where a group home is purchased. These homes often must be able to accommodate necessary improvements to make them safe and accessible for the individuals planning to live there. These improvements often include meeting fire and safety regulations or licensure requirements, consumer accommodations, and environmental system improvements.

While it does not appear that this bill as written would cover homes purchased by private providers, there would be additional concerns if that were the intent. DDS and the Department of Social Services (DSS) approve a development agreement that then dictates what is allowable in the DSS room and board rate that is paid to the provider for the individuals who will be living in the home. Homes are reviewed on an independent basis and purchase prices are limited to the DSS appraised amount. The required implementation of I-2 Fire Codes for all DDS CLAs with four or more beds has increased the development costs for these homes.

While DDS certainly appreciates the need to assure that state resources are spent prudently and appropriately, any proposal that specifically limits the choice of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live where they want to would be contrary to well established rights. If [H.B. No. 5523](#) moves forward, DDS respectfully requests that further discussions take place to make sure that there are no unintended consequences that would hinder the state's ability to develop appropriate homes for individuals with intellectual disability.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important issue. You may contact Christine Pollio Cooney, DDS Director of Legislative and Executive Affairs at (860) 418-6066 if you have any questions or would like to discuss our concerns about [H.B. No. 5523](#).